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SUBJECT: USRAP EXPLORES POSSIBILITY OF INITIATING REFUGEE
RESETTLEMENT IN DJIBOUTI

REF: 08 DJIBOUTI 1042

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) UNHCR-Djibouti anticipates submitting between 400-450 Priority 1 referrals to the USRAP (US Refugee Admissions Program) should USRAP reinitiate refugee resettlement in Djibouti. Embassy Djibouti, while neutral about USRAP re-initiating resettlement activities, is concerned that USRAP activities not be a magnet attracting refugees to Djibouti in the hope of being resettled, that they not disturb Government of Djibouti (GoDJ) relations with neighboring countries, and that resettlement priorities are consistent with US policy in the region. The Regional Refugee Coordinator will return to Djibouti in March to develop a proposal for resettlement for Embassy review.

¶2. (SBU) PRM,s Nairobi-based Regional Refugee Coordinator traveled to Djibouti January 28-30 to explore the possibility of re-initiating USRAP resettlement activities in Djibouti. The Refugee Coordinator met with the Ambassador, DCM, and post's Consular Officer, as well as with the UNHCR Djibouti Representative Ann Encontre. END
SUMMARY

UNHCR Djibouti Expanding Resettlement

¶3. (U) UNHCR Country Representative Ann Encontre confirmed that revamping UNHCR,s resettlement activities in Djibouti) particularly refugee resettlement to the US - is one of her top priorities this year. Encontre believes a revived resettlement program would demonstrate to Djiboutian government officials that the international community is willing to help Djibouti manage a growing refugee population. Encontre believes an increased resettlement program would also help reduce the GoDJ reluctance to open a second refugee camp to relieve current overcrowded camp conditions.

¶4. (SBU) UNHCR reported a total of 9,228 refugees in Djibouti in January 2008 (5,682 Somalis from South/Central Somalia, 2,840 Somalis from NE Somalia, 551 Ethiopians, 150 Eritreans and 5 other nationalities). UNHCR has registered 304 urban refugees in Djibouti with the remaining 8,924

refugees living in the Ali-Addeh camp about 80 kilometers south of Djibouti city. UNHCR expects 3,000-4,000 new arrivals in 2009. UNHCR resettled 74 individuals in 2008: 26 to Norway; 9 to Sweden; 8 to the Netherlands; 7 to Denmark; 5 to the U.K; 1 to Canada; and, submitted 18 dossier cases to UNHCR's Resettlement Service in Geneva. Only 9 Eritreans were resettled in 2008. Sweden is returning to Djibouti in February to discuss its 2009 resettlement plan with UNHCR and has agreed to consider resettling some of the 73 detained Eritreans defectors in Djibouti (Reftel).

USRAP in Djibouti

15. (U) USRAP activities in Djibouti were suspended in 2001 following fraud in UNHCR's resettlement operations. UNHCR confirmed that it has fired the staff implicated in the 2001 fraud, has introduced new resettlement guidelines, and has implemented a training schedule for staff on proper resettlement procedures and accountability. In 2006, UNHCR completed biometric documentation (fingerprints and photographs) of all registered refugees and by March 2009 will have completed a revalidation exercise of all registered refugees. UNHCR continues to clarify its resettlement procedures with its GoDJ counterparts --) primarily ONARS (Office of Assistance to Refugees and Disaster Stricken People) -- on how to obtain Exit Permits, how and what resettlement information will be shared with GoDJ

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officials, and the proper procedures for making referrals to resettlement programs. As part of building its resettlement program, UNHCR has submitted a Resettlement Initiative request to PRM to fund a full-time Senior Resettlement Clerk and two 6-month rotations of an International Catholic Migration Commission deployee.

16. (SBU) If USRAP were to re-engage in Djibouti, UNHCR anticipates submitting between 400-450 referrals to USRAP (out of a total resettlement capacity of 600). UNHCR is prioritizing the resettlement of Ethiopians, minority Somalis (200-300 Bantus/Gaboye Somalis), and protracted Somali caseloads in 2009. Encontre also highlighted the urgency of resettling Eritreans as recently several dozen Eritreans were arrested outside UNHCR offices when they gathered to express their frustration at seeing Ethiopian TV broadcasting the departure of Eritreans from Ethiopia while they languish in Djibouti. The US/CIS (US Citizenship and Immigration Services) office in Nairobi has confirmed that US/CIS is willing to resume processing all P3 and P1 cases referred to USRAP after 2001, but would require additional information from UNHCR before considering cases that were reviewed or investigated as part of UNHCR's July 2001 investigation. The Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) indicated it has at least 76 cases/421 individual P3 cases and 31 cases/109 individual P1 cases received after 2001. UNHCR does not anticipate significant additional referrals to USRAP believing when the 600 referrals are resettled the residual resettlement caseload will consist largely of protection cases.

Embassy Djibouti Neutral but Cautious

17. (SBU) The Ambassador said he was neutral to re-establishing USRAP operations in Djibouti and requested additional information in order to make an informed decision. In particular, the Ambassador wanted to be sure USRAP operations did not create a magnet affect: drawing refugees who came to Djibouti only in hopes of being resettled, and

that the populations identified for resettlement did not compromise bilateral relationships between GoDJ and its neighbors. While not anticipating problems resettling Somalis (particularly Bantu Somalis or protracted cases from southern/central Somalia), the Ambassador was more cautious with the prospect of resettling Eritreans (particularly military defectors) and Ethiopians (primarily Oromos and Ogadenis or former Communist Dergue members). The Ambassador said any resettlement plan should begin small and build over time. He also said it would be important that refugee referrals to USRAP be based on clearly defined criteria to minimize confusion or misinterpretation of the resettlement program as well as to contain any magnet effects of increased resettlement activities.

Next Steps

18. (SBU) The Ambassador said the embassy will explore GoDJ reactions to re-initiating USRAP resettlement activities in Djibouti including identifying any &redlines8 the GoDJ may have for increased resettlement activities. Embassy Djibouti will also reach out to Embassy Addis to determine how the resettlement of Ethiopians might be perceived by the GOE. The Refugee Coordinator will return to Djibouti in March and, drawing from UNHCR,s revalidation results, develop a draft proposal for USRAP resettlement -including targeted groups, criteria for selections, measures to limit any magnet effect, and a possible timeline for resettlement- to be presented to the embassy. If a resettlement plan is agreed upon in Djibouti, AF concurrence would also be sought in view of regional implications.
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